**Research and Discussion Topic: Personality Surveys - Measuring Your Personality Traits**

Post your response in the Discussion Forum to earn 30 points for your primary response to the assignment plus two points for each of two responses to other students = 34 points total. We will all be able to comment on each other's views of this suvey and our astroligical sun sign comparison with it.

**Learning Objectives for this assignment**

1. Compare the results of a commonly used personality survey with one's self-described traits, and with the traits found in one's astrological sun sign description.

2. Identify applications of personality surveys to the workplace.

3. Compare the scientific perspective of personality trait assessment and predictions of behavior with those of astrology.

This assignment will be more fun than hard work! You can easily complete this assignment in stages to break up your time. Your response will earn maximum points if it conveys a high degree of understanding of the scientific approach to personality compared to other approaches.

**Tasks to complete before writing your response to the assignment**

Complete the personality survey listed below. Print out your results or keep a written record of your score and what it means. After completing this measurement of your personality, think about the description of yourself that is provided and how the five traits describe you when combined together. Next, you will compare this description with that provided by your astrological sun sign. After thinking about these two descriptions of you, address the questions at the end of this Topic for your reply.

A. **Complete a variation of the Five Factor Personality Survey**

The assignment below is a personality survey based on the Five Factor trait theory that is a commonly used description of pesonality traits. It measures our "overall" personality according to a theoretical perspective that is frequently used in psychological research. **The "Big Five"** personality factors appear in virtually every personality theory and survey. Dr. John Johnson of Pennsylvania State University's Psychology Department presents a generic non-copyrighted version of the Big 5 personality survey (called the NEO Five Factor Profile) on his Pennsylvania State University faculty web site. Dr. Johnson is conducting research over the Internet on the relationship of these traits to other individual characteristics. You will be asked a few questions about yourself that are important to classifying you a person in his research project, but nothing will identify you personally, nor will you receive any commercial messages. His faculty web page explains his research if you care to take the time to review it, but this is not required for this assignment:<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/5/j5j/> Click on the “professional activities” link in upper right corner. To take the personality survey, **open a separate browser window** to the web page titled “The IPIP-NEO” at:<http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/j/5/j5j/IPIP/>

You may choose the 300 item survey or the briefer version of 120 items. The longer version will be somewhat more accurate but will take more time, obviously. I completed the 120 item version in about 15 minutes, and the 300 item version in about 35 minutes, although I am very used to these type of surveys. Either one is OK for this assignment. **Read the instructions carefully**. You must agree that you read the disclaimers before you are able to access the survey. You will receive a personality profile upon your submission of the completed survey. I suggest that you save your profile immediately on your hard drive for future reference (and to avoid losing it accidentally while reading it!). If you answer the items haphazardly, your results will be inaccurate. Take your time and answer thoughtfully about how you really think you are generally, not just how you feel at the moment you are completing the survey.

You will find a wealth of additional information on the Big 5 traits at the following web site which is also listed in the introduction to the personality survey:

<http://centacs.com/quickstart.htm> Scroll down to "Big 5 Defined" to read about the five dimensions of personality assessed by the Big 5 survey - but read it AFTER you take complete the survey so that your answers are not biased by how you “wish” your traits would be.

B. **Learn about** **Your Astrological Sun Sign**

Next, compare your Five Factor personality description with your astrological sun sign description of your personality. This link to Astrology Online provides descriptions of sun signs:<http://www.astrology-online.com/frames.htm> (Scroll down the page to the “Sign Explanations” link in the left frame). You may use any other sources of astrological personality description if you prefer. This is merely a web site I located that seems adequate for our purposes, but I am no expert in astrology. I cannot vouch for accuracy, and you may get hit with pop-ups and commercial advertising. You are NOT being asked to buy anything or divulge any personal information for this assignment. Again, you may use any source of astrological information you wish as long as you can compare your astrological sun sign personality traits with your Five Factor traits.

**C. Learn about Astrology from and astronomer’s perspective**

Read the article in ProQuest:

Bakich, M. E. (2004). Astrology: fact or fiction? *Astronomy, 32,* (12), 50-56.

**D.** **Learn how the Five Factor personality traits predict levels of job satisfaction.**

Read this free sample article on the APA web site: Five Factor Model and Job Satisfaction: a Meta-analysis from the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, June 2002 on this web page:<http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycarticles/sample.aspx>. (Right click on the link and select "open article in new window" for easier reading). You need read only two sections of this peer-reviewed research journal article and they are easy reading. Read "Relationships of the Big 5 Traits with Job Satisfaction" and the "Discussion" section at the end of the article.

**E. Read about an experiment testing the validity of astrological sun sign decriptions** by comparing students ability to recognize their own sun sign description compared to their NEO Five Factor Personality Survey (The Big 5 profile basically). This experiment used the double-blind procedure to test whether students could recognitze their own personality descriptions or fell prey to "the Barnum Effect". You may find the entire article interesting enough to read, but you need read only the first and last sections for this assignment (from the beginning to the Methods section; and the Discussion section. You do not need to understand the research jargon and statistical procedures & tables to get the main ideas of the study and results. The article is in ProQuest: "Science vs. the stars: A double-blind test of the validity of the NEO Five Factor Inventory and computer generated astrological natal charts". *Journal of General Psychology*, July 2008, volume 135, issue 3, pages 287-300. Compose and APA formatted reference to include in your response below.

**Your reply to this Topic should address the following points:**

(You should do this in your word processor and copy it to the Message Window.)

**1.** Write a description of your personality based solely upon the results of the Big 5 traits. Include your relative amounts of the traits such as High in extraversion, low in conscientiousness, etc. (**200-300 words or so,** **10 points**)

**2.** How does this statement feel to you? **(50-100 words or so; 2 points)**

* Does it describe you adequately? If a stranger read it, would they have an accurate description of you?
* Do these personality traits accurately predict your behavior in various situations?
* This personality survey most likely describes you as others see you. Just because you do not think it sounds like you is not a valid reason to automatically dismiss it as inaccurate. Ask a couple of individuals who know you well about their view of its accuracy (not required for this assignment, but a very interesting conversation starter).

**3.** What do your Five Factor trait scores predict about your level of job satisfaction as indicated in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* article? How does this compare with your experience of jobs you have had so far? **(150-200 words or so; 4 points)**

**4.** How does the description you wrote based upon the personality surveys compare to your astrology-based Sun Sign personality (E.g. Aquarius, Leo, Libra, etc.) that you read on the astrology web site (or another source of astrology personality descriptions you used) . Describe the similarities and differences that you see. Which seems to be the more accurate description of you, and how do you account for this accuracy? **(200 words or so; 4 points)**

**5.** After reading your textbook pages on perosnality surveys AND the article in *Astronomy*, AND the article in *The Journal of Psychology*, describe the view held by psychologists and astronomers of the validity (accuracy and trustworthiness) of your Astrological Sun Sign personality description. Incorporate significant elements of the textbook section, the *Astronomy* article, and the *Journal of General Psychology* article information in our in your response. **(300 words or so; 8 points)**

**6. Compose and APA formatted reference** for the *Journal of General Psychology* article "Science vs. the stars: A double-blind test of the validity of the NEO Five Factor Inventory and computer generated astrological natal charts". **(2 points)**

**Respond to other students** as you wish about their views of the validity of the personality survey vs. astrological signs. It should be a lot fun to discuss our personality traits from this survey compared to how we seem to others in this class. Speak your mind about the survey results, astrology, and each other to earn two points for each of two responses. I trust (and require) that we will be kind to each other, not rude or insulting. **(two points each up to four points)**

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